



Something Different

Every single moment is about the spiritual journey.

In 2007, I traveled alone to India. I intended to have a solitary pilgrimage, but I had no idea I'd be experiencing such deep loneliness. I thought a lot about my friends inside who tell me about their loneliness in the middle of large groups of people. That was my experience in crowded India.

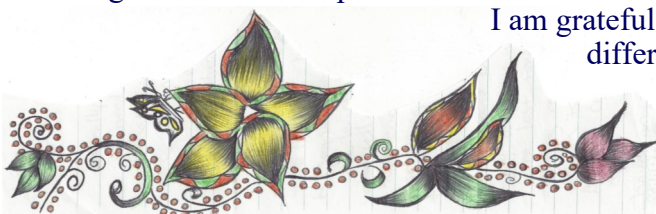
Just before I left for the trip, my friend Suzanna gave me a book written by another friend, Mickey Singer. *The Untethered Soul* became my companion on that journey. It went straight to my heart, touching me deeply. On the following pages, you can read some of my favorite passages from the book.

Now, ten years later, Catherine and I are visiting at Temple of the Universe, home to *The Untethered Soul*'s author Michael Singer (we call him Mickey). The temple is near Gainesville, Florida, where Bo and I decided 50 years ago to drop out of college and do something different with our lives.

Bo and Mickey went to high school together and reconnected much later when they were both teaching about spirituality in prisons. Now I smile with my dear friend Mickey, taking a long walk on a gorgeous Florida morning. The sun sparkles in the trees and on the dewy grass. Mickey's excitement and joy are contagious as he points around us exclaiming about the beauty of this little planet spinning around one small star in a vast universe. I feel a transmission from him about the immensity of God. I am grateful for this time with my dear friend. So wonderful being able to walk on planet Earth and talk about God's abundant grace and love.

I am grateful for all of it. That decision 50 years ago to do "something different" with our lives together led Bo and me to our journey with all of you. Thank you for walking with us. I love you,

Sita



Human Kindness Foundation has a new logo!

Some things change:

Thanks to our new friend Jeff Lawson, we now have a beautiful logo and a new look for our newsletters. Jeff is the artist and owner of Cowan Graphic Design, and co-founder of a Social Enterprise called Perfectly Afflicted. Jeff and co-founder Chris Hendricks share their personal stories of overcoming hardship as they connect with young people in efforts to prevent teen suicide. They use music, creativity, and open-hearted enthusiasm to help young people build self-esteem and hope. Perfectly Afflicted's message, "there's only one you," emphasizes their belief in the value of each and every person's life.

And some things don't:

We've been using the title "A Little Good News" for our newsletter since 1993, and we plan to keep using it. We know there's a lot of pain and suffering in the world. And still we believe it's important to notice good news and good people. We hope our newsletters will always remind you that there are people who care about you and a spiritual journey available to you, no matter where you are. That's very good news for all of us.

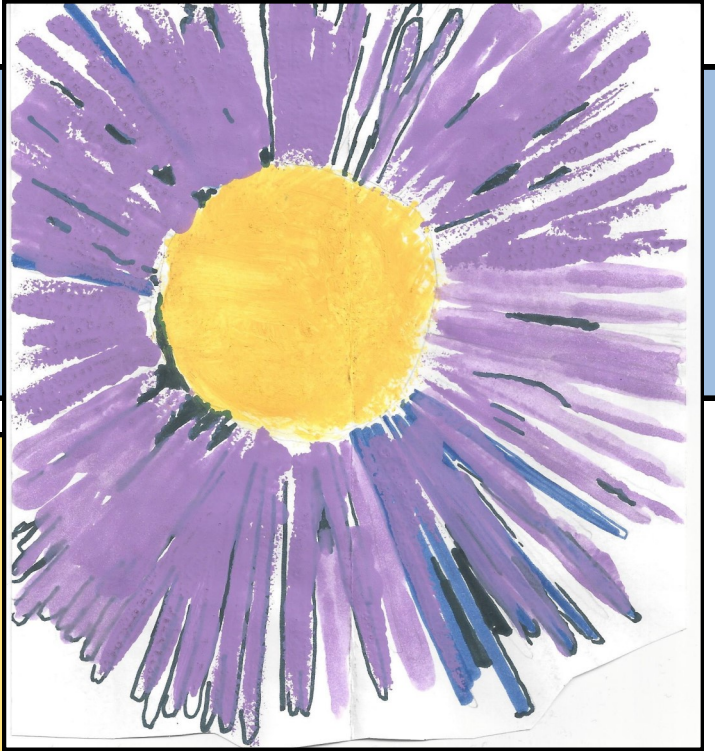
Much love to you from
the whole HKF family





Mickey Singer has been a great friend and supporter of HKF for many years. He recently welcomed Sita and Catherine to his peaceful home for a visit. His insight about life, the mind, and real freedom has had a profound impact on many people, including Oprah Winfrey. We encourage you to spend time with Mickey's teachings. We've chosen some words from *The Untethered Soul* to share with you. Don't be fooled into rushing through these short passages. These truths could change your life.

The day you decide that you are more interested in being aware of your thoughts than you are in the thoughts themselves—that is the day you will find your way out.



This is the essential difference between a spiritually minded person and a worldly person. Worldly doesn't mean that you have money or stature. Worldly means that you think the solution to your inner problems is in the world outside. You think that if you change things outside, you'll be okay. But nobody ever truly becomes okay by changing things outside. There is always the next problem.... You have to break the habit of thinking that the solution to your problems is to rearrange things outside. The only permanent solution to your problems is to go inside.



Sita inside Temple of the Universe. Visiting the temple means lots of practice: meditation, chanting, yoga, listening to spiritual teachings. Remember that *We're All Doing Time* has instructions for doing spiritual practice anywhere. If you don't have your own copy of *We're All Doing Time*, write to us and request one in English or Spanish. Write to

HKF, PO Box 61619, Durham, NC 27715 for a free book (or order at www.humankindness.org if you want to purchase a book).

Ninety-nine percent of your thoughts are a complete waste of time. They do nothing but freak you out.

Do not let anything that happens in life be important enough that you're willing to close your heart over it.

When your heart starts to close, just say, "No. I'm not going to close. I'm going to relax. I'm going to let this situation take place and be there with it." Honor and respect the situation, and deal with it. By all means deal with it. Do the best you can. But deal with it with openness. Deal with it with excitement and enthusiasm. No matter what it is, just let it be the sport of the day. In time, you will find that you forget how to close. ... You will embrace life with all your heart and soul. Once you've attained this very high state, your energy level will be phenomenal. You will have all the energy you need at all times. Just relax and open, and tremendous energy will rush up inside of you. You are only limited by your ability to stay open.

If you really want to stay open, pay attention when you feel love and enthusiasm. Then ask yourself why you can't feel this all the time. Why does it have to go away? The answer is obvious: it only goes away if you choose to close. By closing, you are actually making the choice not to feel openness and love. You throw love away all the time. You feel love until somebody says something you don't like, and then you give up the love.... It's your choice. You can either close because you don't like what happened, or you can keep feeling love and enthusiasm by not closing. As long as you are defining what you like and what you don't like, you will open and close.



If you have access to the internet, you can purchase *The Untethered Soul* and learn more about Michael Singer by going to <http://untetheredsoul.com/>

Practice: TAKING MINDFULNESS TO A NEW LEVEL

By Bo Lozoff, August, 2008

*During our visit with Mickey Singer I heard Sita say that Mickey's energy and teachings feel similar to Bo's. This article, written by Bo in 2008, fits well with the teachings from The Untethered Soul. Bo, Sita, and Mickey all agree that **every single moment is about the spiritual journey.***

Maybe that sounds like "all work and no play." But remember Mickey's joy on his daily walks. Remember the big smiles you see on Sita's face. Remember that Bo put lots of cartoons in his books and loved motorcycles. Yes, spiritual practice is sometimes very hard work, but there is joy and laughter and love. That's what we wish for you. —Catherine



"Mindfulness" is a word that is seen and heard more and more often these days, and the simplest definition is usually that mindfulness means to pay attention to what you are doing at the moment; do one thing at a time, and do it well. This is true, but our practice of mindfulness often stays at a pretty superficial level, and we may fail to grasp how powerful and life-saving the practice can really be.

The primary purpose of mindfulness practice is to prevent the mind from running wild and always keeping us at a distance from where we are right now. Every spiritual tradition reminds us that "right now" is all that exists. If we allow ourselves to be lost in thoughts about the past or future, we are letting the present moment slip away, and then the next moment slips away and the next and the next, and our lives are over before we know it, and we feel somehow cheated from ever having "landed" square in the middle of our journey. It was always about what happened before or what comes next.

So the basic practice of mindfulness is to bring your attention to what is happening now. For example, at this moment, you are reading this article. Take a second to feel yourself sitting and breathing. Breathe consciously, smoothly. Relax your body, let go of any sense that you should be somewhere else or should be doing something else. You are here. Be here fully. Feel your hands holding this newsletter. Become aware of the sounds around you. Pay attention to detail. Are you paying attention? All the martial arts are about one-pointed attention. That's all mindfulness basically is—one-pointed attention from the time you

wake up 'til the time you fall asleep. Paying full attention to everything you do. When you are in severe crisis, it will be tempting to forget about mindfulness entirely, or even angrily reject it—"Screw that crap, this is real!!" But those are the times mindfulness is actually the most important.

In your most depressed moments, your most anguished or panicked moments, your angriest moments, your most frightened moments, mindfulness practice can bring your attention to the simplest basic reality—being right here where you are, breathing, heart beating, blood flowing, just being here. It can free you instantly from the tyranny of a mind that is freaked out and should not be in charge. Take your energy out of the mind and into the body, the physical world, plant your feet on the solid ground of experience instead of thought. Breathing is not a thought, it is an experience. Sounds, touch, sights, tastes, smells are not thoughts. Mindfulness is to ground yourself in the experiential even if just for a moment, and then approach your difficulty from that center.

Use the mind, for sure, but don't be used by it. Your center is not the mind. The mind is one of your tools,



like the arms and legs. A great saint once said "The mind is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master." Mindfulness practice—especially during our hardest times—helps us to make sure mind is the servant, not the master. In all things, big & small, bring full awareness to what you're doing.

By Bo Lozoff, 1947-2012

**Listen closely friend,
The wind whispers our answers —
Seek the sound of now.**

Haiku Number Two
by Ryan M. Moser



The same friend who first handed Sita a copy of *The Untethered Soul* ten years ago now lives near Gainesville. We stopped in to visit her and the puppies she rescued.



Dare to be different.
Enjoy all of life.
—Mickey Singer

It's actually a shocking realization when you first notice that your mind is constantly talking. You might even try to yell at it in a feeble attempt to shut it up. But then you realize that's the voice yelling at the voice.

—Mickey Singer

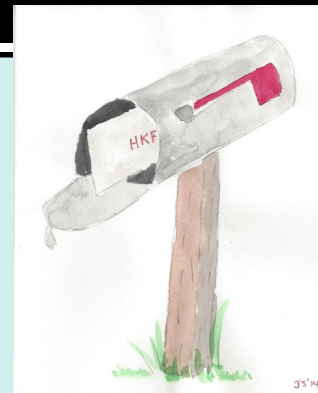


You are not the voice of the mind—you are the one who hears it.

—Mickey Singer

Letters

I was reading an outstanding book by Bo Lozoff called *We're All Doing Time*. In one particular letter written to Bo, a prisoner shared that he was in prison for taking a life. I related to him when he said he felt the pain would never leave. Caught off guard at what he said next, my heart immediately felt the truth of his words. He said that his pain is a clear connection of love to the person whose life he took. Before that statement I never consciously thought of my pain and my remorse as a form of loving. Viewing my pain in this new context, I now whole heartedly accept and welcome it....My pain is no longer something I try to escape from; now it's a light or a beacon that plays an important part in guiding me. ... I am thankful for that prisoner as well as for all the other prisoners' letters of sharing and insights. —Alvin Taylor



Dear HKF,

I have been in and out of prison for 30 years. I'm currently on my 6th term of incarceration with 8 years in. I was raised in a good Christian family, but I strayed away and never came back to it. When I caught this case in 2009, I was shot and left to die. I cried out to God while in the hospital, and he answered. He gave me back mobility because doctors said I would never walk again. Ever since then, I've dedicated my life to Christ.

I really appreciate your newsletter and have read all of your books. The only thing I didn't get back is my family. They have completely turned their back on me, and this is eating me up inside and has me feeling hopeless. If you have any advice for me on this, I'd love to hear from you.

God bless you, R.

R.,

Glad you wrote us and glad to hear about the path you are on. I've been out over six years, but I did 19 years in prison myself and have a lot of experience on dealing with family that have been hurt by my actions. I just wanted to write and share my thoughts and hope it helps in some way. I don't know your whole story or your situation, I don't want to and I don't need to.

I have some family I haven't spoken with in over 25 years because of the pain I caused. I realized long ago that there was no making up to them for the wrong I did. I had crossed a line that there was no second chance

at. And just because I had turned my life around and will never be the person I was before doesn't change the things I did. I hurt people and in some ways there is nothing I can do about that. It tears me up inside and makes my stomach sick, but that is something you have to deal with. I still deal with it and live my life now doing something about the things I can change.

Maybe the people you hurt need more time or maybe they may never want to talk to you, either way that's not up to you. I'm sure you want to cause them as little pain as you can, so it

might be best to give them the time and space they need. You got to remember, they've heard all our lies and promises before, and just because this time really is different for us, it's not to them. The best thing is to show them and prove it, instead of trying to tell them, and that takes time... maybe years. You do that by how you live your life from here.

In your letter you said your family abandoned you. To me that says you need to take a better look at your part in all this. Until you really and truly take full responsibility for your actions you can't begin to heal. Only then do you realize it's your fault and that you can do something about it.

I encourage you to remember that feeling of laying in that hospital bed with doctors telling you that you wouldn't walk again and begging God for one more chance... you got it!!!! If you really have faith in God you will trust that you will get just what you need for this journey—not what you want.

Look back through Bo's books and read them like he's talking to you. If you haven't read them, I encourage you to. They really are the reason I am who I am today. I always found help when I needed it and it seems every time I read one of the responses to a letter he wrote I found something I had missed before.

I know this can be hard and feels like it's not worth it at times, but it is. I swear it is and hope you get to see that for yourself.

Many blessings friend, Gabe



Dear Human Kindness Foundation,

When I caught this time in 2015, I lost both of my children for good, and I lost the girl of my dreams. I abused her and I was so strung out on meth and alcohol that I lost my mind and didn't care about no one. I have so many things weighing me down that some days I can't even get out of bed. I've done a lot of bad things in my life that I know are gonna come back on me, and I've accepted that. But right now I'm so lonely and so empty on the inside. I don't have no one no more because I've burnt all my bridges and people just stopped communicating with me. I don't see no hope, and I'm always angry and have so much hate inside me that I see myself eventually doing some more bad things. How do I get this hate out of me? What can I do? I need help. I don't even know what love is anymore. How do I get that back again? Please help me.

S.

Dear S.,

My name is Chris Canfield, and I'm a volunteer here at HKF. As I read your letter and felt your pain and torment, it also felt like thousands of others were reading it with me. They were the inmates and former inmates we've connected with over the past 40-plus years. I could hear them saying, "Yeah, man, I hear you. I've been there. It's tough. It hurts."

You are not alone. We are here for you—those of us at HKF and all the others who have been through the same

thing. The shame, the loneliness, the self-hatred, the anger. We've enclosed a copy of a newsletter we did a few years back focused on anger.

Some of those voices are people just like you. I hope they help. But let me add a few other words that I heard as I read your letter.

"There is a way past this." We know that because of the people just like you who have shown us. If caring and helping and loving others didn't help, HKF wouldn't still be "in business." Yet here we are. Still getting stacks of letters from people lost and desperate like you. And also getting amazing letters from people healing and helping on the other side of that.

"What you are feeling is normal." It is actually a sign of progress and hope.

I know that sounds strange. But the awareness you have of the impact of your actions is a painful but crucial step in healing.

"Love is our natural state." It is not something to be found and created but something to be rediscovered. It takes effort, lots of effort, to fight love, to feed hatred and anger, to push people

away. Our world works hard at it, sadly, every single day. Sounds like you may just be exhausted.

"Don't believe everything you think." The same ego that convinced you to do the drugs, hurt others, and destroy yourself is now trying a new game. It's taking your understandable remorse and twisting it into feeling worthless and no-good and unlovable. Why? So it can be in control and get you to justify again (you guessed it) doing drugs, hurting others and destroying yourself. But know that the ego is desperate because it sees you emptying and opening. It's afraid it will lose control if you start caring and helping and loving.

"Help is always available—you've just got to open to it." Even in a place as challenging as the prison you describe, I bet there are people on the path to healing who would be glad to help you. And the best way to find them is by committing to helping others yourself. Bo Lozoff used to challenge inmates straight on: "If this place is so bad, why aren't you trying to make it better?" You are not powerless. Even the smallest acts of kindness can change the energy around you. Be safe. Be wise. But be persistent. Thousands upon thousands of us are pulling for you.

With wishes for peace and love,
Chris and all of us at HKF



Many thanks to the artists:

pg 1: Delia Davila, Marlin, TX;

pg 2: Mike Wayne Denis Parker, Ontario, Canada; pg 4: Lopez Martin Diaz, Beeville, TX (upper), Clifford W. Hamilton, Huntsville, TX (lower); pg 5: Francis J. Leary, Amarillo, TX (left), Patricia Colville, Las Vegas, NV (right); pg 6: John Sanger, Hominy, OK (upper), Johnny Johns, Tennessee Colony, TX (lower); pg 7: Jimmy Lee, Gatesville, TX (upper), Patricia Starling, Belle Glade, FL (lower); pg 8: Stephen Land, Joplin, MO.

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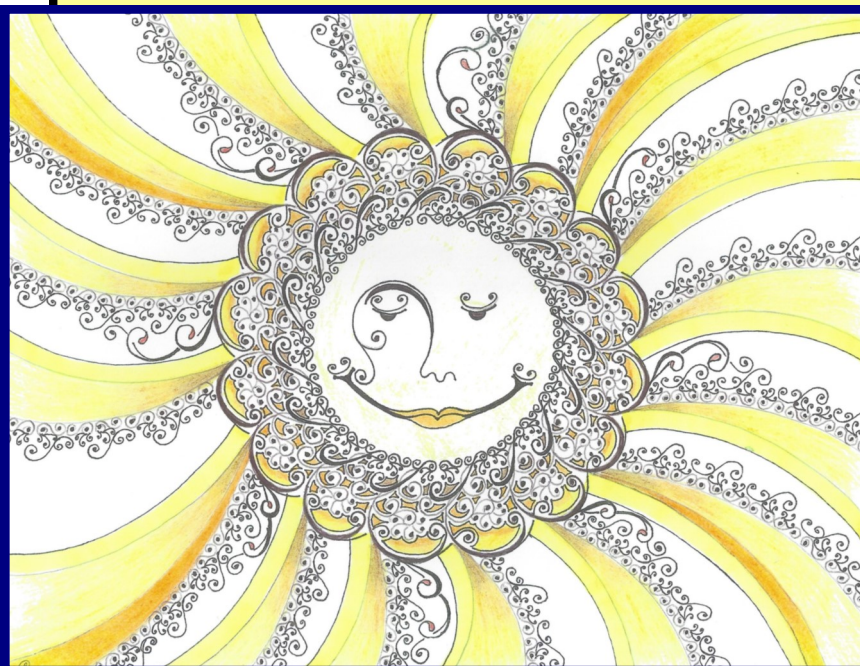
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Your relationship with God is the same as your relationship with the sun. If you



hid from the sun for years and then chose to come out of your darkness, the sun would still be shining as if you had never left. You don't need to apologize. You just pick your head up and look at the sun. It's the same way when you decide to turn toward God—you just do it. If, instead, you allow guilt and shame to interfere, that's just your ego blocking the Divine Force. You can't offend the Divine One; its very nature is light, love, compassion, protection, and

giving. You can't make it stop loving you. It's just like the sun. You can't make the sun stop shining on you; you can only choose not to look at it. The moment you look you'll see it's there.

—Michael Singer, The Untethered Soul